Contractor Engagement & Workforce Development – Develop Resources

Description

To recruit, train, and support contractors as they participate in your program, you'll need to make a multifaceted effort. You have already defined your contractor audience and partners, made design decisions, designed your contractor engagement plan, and chosen metrics. Your path to success can now be bolstered by a set of high-quality resources to draw on.

In particular, you should consider developing enrollment materials, checklists, submission forms for databases and their user interfaces, contractor marketing templates, technical and business training materials, and process evaluation materials. Your contractor engagement and workforce development resources should complement your overall program resources.

In developing these resources, you'll take the following steps:

- Hire and train program staff
- Create program forms and materials for contractors
- Create contractor recruitment and enrollment materials
- Plan for regular contractor meetings
- Develop training resources for participating contractors
- Create other resources and processes to support contractors
- Develop contractor marketing support materials
- Develop process evaluation materials.

Find related information across other program components:

- Market Position & Business Model – Develop Resources
  Identify and develop needed resources to position your organization in the market and maintain a viable business model.
- Program Design & Customer Experience – Develop Resources
  Develop the necessary materials, tools, and staff capacity to effectively deliver and manage your program.
- Marketing & Outreach – Develop Resources
  Create your program's branding guidelines and materials to elevate program visibility and support your marketing and outreach efforts.
- Financing – Develop Resources
  Develop the procurement, outreach, and loan support resources required to perform your financing activities.

Step-by-Step

Having defined your contractor audience and partners, made design decisions about your program, designed your contractor engagement plan, and created evaluation plans, you can develop resources to engage contractors, help them get the training they need, and support quality installations of energy-saving measures.

Hire and train program staff

Depending on your overall **program design**, contractor engagement and workforce development can be one of the most resource-intensive parts of your program. The type of staff you hire will depend on the type of support you are providing to contractors and participants, ranging from clerical processing to highly technical training and field mentoring. You will need staff for account management, program participation support, in-field technical mentoring, and quality assurance. Whether you hire staff with existing qualifications or train them to gain competency, they will need the skills to deliver the types of program services included in your **implementation plan** while being personable team members.

They must at least be very knowledgeable across the functional areas of the program, including its design and requirements. This does not mean all staff need to be technical trainers—but they should understand the basics of the program approach, the processes for contractor and homeowner participation, and whom and what resources to refer contractors to. Staff need a thorough understanding of your program components so that they can deliver consistent messages to contractors and the homeowners they work with.

Other competencies depend on roles you have established, as described in the examples below.

Account management. Some programs designate an account manager as a liaison between the program and participating contractors. This gives contractors a primary point of contact for the program, so they always know whom to call. Much of the communication with, feedback from, and feedback to contractors will happen formally and informally through the account manager. The account manager may also serve as a mentor, gatekeeper, and a referral source, connecting contractors to other resources in the program.

Using an account manager allows someone on the program side to better understand the needs of the contractor across all aspects of the business as they relate to program participation. As the program's primary liaison to contractors, the account manager must be able to relate to and communicate well with them and to listen and respond as needed.

Depending on the size of your program, the number of staff, skill-set of the manager, and the level of support provided, the account manager can also take on all or some of the support functions described below, or they can be handled by other staff or through outside resources.

Program participation support. To gain buy-in from contractors, your program will need to help them learn the details of program participation and incorporate program processes into their business practices. Programs that can spend time helping contractors get up to speed in these areas find that participation increases more quickly. Typically, contractors need help:

- Understanding who should complete paperwork
- Using online submission and tracking tools
- Carrying out any program-required energy modeling
- Staying informed of any program changes.

This support can be provided by someone with good clerical and organization skills and the ability to teach these skills to contractors' staff via phone conversations, via remote desktop sharing, or in-person in contractors' offices.

In-field technical mentoring. From conducting energy assessments to installing energy efficiency measures, technicians can often benefit from additional guidance and instruction in the field to supplement classroom or lab-based training. If you will be using program staff to provide in-field mentoring, they will need a solid understanding of residential contracting practices, local codes, and the technical skills required by the program. At a minimum, they should be fully qualified according to the worker standards and certifications that you require for contractors. They must gain the contractors' confidence to be successful for the program.

Quality assurance/quality control inspection. In some programs, the same staff that provide technical training and mentoring support provide quality inspections. In other programs, separate staff have these roles, either because this separation is required or merely as a function of how staff are allocated and assigned. Your quality inspectors must have a solid understanding of residential contracting practices, local codes, and the appropriate technical skills required by the program. They should also be fully qualified according to the worker standards and certifications that you require for contractors. Quality inspectors, like field mentors, need to gain the confidence of contractors to be valuable to the program.

Quality Control Inspector Certification

The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE's) ***Guidelines for Home Energy Professionals*** is a suite of resources that include work quality specifications, job task analyses for worker certifications, and a training program accreditation process. These resources outline work expectations and certifications available for quality control inspectors and others in the residential energy upgrade industry.

Four national home energy professional certifications are available based on the job task analyses in DOE's *Guidelines*. They address the following roles:

- The **installer/technician**, who performs the actual installation
- The **crew leader**, who directs and supervises the work of installers
- The **energy auditor**, who assesses the home before the work begins for energy savings opportunities and writes a scope of work for the crew
- The **quality control inspector**, who inspects the quality of the installed work

The certifications are job-oriented and require a fully trained or experienced professional to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and abilities for a specific role. Designed to build on each other, they provide a career ladder in the home energy upgrade industry.

Through a competitive solicitation, DOE chose the **Building Performance Institute** (BPI) to be the first organization to deliver these professional certifications to the weatherization network and the greater home performance marketplace. The certification blueprints are also available to other qualified certifying bodies. For more information, please visit the **Guidelines certifications webpage**.

The **Weatherization Assistance Program Technical Assistance Center** has developed a series of **lesson plans, presentations, quizzes, and handouts** to prepare candidates to be quality control inspectors. These materials align with the DOE *Guidelines for Home Energy Professionals*; their structure is based on the job task analyses.

Create program forms and materials for contractors

To help contractors participate in your program, you will need to explain the **overall program** to them in a way that is specific to their role in delivering the program. You need to create clear, concise, easy-to-understand materials, including applications, checklists, and forms that they can use to efficiently and effectively follow program processes. This step describes several categories of forms and materials that you should consider developing, including contractor handbooks, a summary flow chart for contractors to use as a training roadmap and reference, project requirements checklists and forms, and quality assurance/quality control inspection forms and procedures.

In general, these materials will include overall guidance and procedures for contractor participation. Many programs consolidate the guidance and forms into a contractor handbook. Forms and checklists can address specific aspects of service delivery and contractor support—for example, quality assurance inspection forms or project requirements checklists. Think about the most useful format for each resource. Some of these items need only be available to contractors in hard copy or electronic form. Others, like a contractor handbook, may be better suited for online publication, perhaps with downloadable forms. Remember to keep all documents updated and current.

Checklists and forms can help keep both the program and contractors organized. They can help you verify that requirements are met, track project status, and collect **data for program evaluation**. If contractors know what you expect of them and can verify these items using a checklist, they are less likely to be frustrated or surprised. Similarly, if program staff are working from the same lists, they can more efficiently verify what needs to be checked and avoid delays.

You may need to develop your own materials to suit your needs; you might instead adapt existing examples, such as the **downloadable forms** described in the textbox below.

Downloadable Forms on the Efficiency Maine Website

Efficiency Maine has an **online portal** where many of its program forms are available for download. They have developed program overviews and manuals, participation agreements, and related application materials. Below is an example of a vendor agreement form that contractors can fill out in order to be listed on a program website.

Residential Registered Vendor Agreement Form

To be listed as a Registered Vendor on the Efficiency Maine website, please complete this form, sign it and submit it with the appropriate documentation.

Section 1: Registered Vendor Information. Please enter information you would like to appear on the website.

Business Name		Phone Number	
Street Address		Fax Number	
City, State, Zip		Business Email	
Contact Name		Website	

Section 2: Basic Requirements. Please include the following documentation when submitting agreement form.

✓	Required Documentation
	Code of Conduct: http://www.efficiencymaine.com/docs/EMCode-of-Conduct.pdf
	General Commercial or Professional Liability Insurance (Minimum coverage: $500,000)
	Workers Compensation Insurance (Minimum coverage: $500,000) ***Please Note:*** *A Sole Proprietor without employees is not required to have Workers Compensation coverage. Similarly, a Limited Liability Corporation without employees is not required to have Workers Compensation coverage for the owners. If your business is exempt from this requirement, please write "NA" in the checkbox to the left.*

Section 3: Service Offerings and Qualifications. To have the following services reflected on the Efficiency Maine Locator, please check the rows that apply and **SUBMIT DOCUMENTATION OF APPLICABLE QUALIFICATION(S)**:

✓	Service Offering	Qualification(s)*
	Energy Advisor	Building Performance Institute (BPI) Building Analyst **AND** Maine Limited Energy Auditor Technician (LEAT) license
	Air Sealing and Assessment	Building Performance Institute (BPI) Building Analyst **AND** Maine Limited Energy Auditor Technician (LEAT) license
	Insulation	Insulation installation training
	Heat Pumps	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Section 608 Refrigerant Handling Certification **AND** installation training within the last two years by a manufacturer of ENERGY STAR heat pumps
	Gas	Maine Fuel Board License (Master or Journeyman, Propane and Natural Gas Technician)
	Oil	Maine Fuel Board License (Master or Journeyman, Oil and Solid Fuel Technician)
	Pellet Boilers	Maine Fuel Board License (Master or Journeyman, Oil and Solid Fuel Technician)
	Pellet/Wood Stoves	Maine Fuel Board License (Master or Journeyman, Oil and Solid Fuel Technician) **OR** Chimney Safety Institute of America (CSIA)- **OR** National Fireplace Institute (NFI)-certified
	Geothermal	International Ground Source Heat Pump Association (IGSHPA)-Accredited Installer
	Heat Pump Water Heaters	Maine Plumber's License (Master or Journeyman)
	Solar	North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) Certificate

At least one employee or exclusive subcontractor must have this certification. Any given certificate will only be represented once on the Locator (one listing per certificate).

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*Source: **Efficiency Main Downloads and Forms Portal**, Efficiency Maine, 2013.*

Contractor Handbook

A contractor handbook can consolidate everything contractors need to know to participate in your program successfully. It describes the program, requirements, and procedures relevant to contractors, and should include:

- An overview of the program
- Requirements for contractor participation
- Processes and procedures contractors need to follow on qualifying upgrade assessments and projects
- Instructions on how to submit forms, rebate applications, and other requirements
- A code of conduct and rules for dismissal from the program.

The handbook is the contractors' reference manual. Like all program materials, it should be part of a consistent message (e.g., it should present the preferred terminology for use by the contractors).

You may find it useful and less costly over time to maintain the handbook in a Web-based format, so you can update it as needed and contractors always know where to find the most current program information.

New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Contractor Manual

NYSERDA has developed an **online contractor manual** for use by contractors participating in their New York Home Performance with ENERGY STAR (HPwES) program. The manual is intended to help contractors understand and navigate their HPwES program. It provides important information about HPwES program rules, opportunities, incentives, and forms. The manual is a comprehensive contractor handbook that contains many useful examples of the forms, procedures, and other resources described in this handbook.

Summary Flow Chart

A project flow chart, showing the process involved in a typical project, can be a useful training roadmap and a reference for contractor staff. It can also serve as a standalone document for contractor recruiting. For example, see the process flow chart for Energy Smart Colorado in the box below.

The flow chart should indicate not just the steps, but who is responsible for what—whether it is the participating contractor, program staff, or an outside entity. You can consider including short notes about expected processing times. Either as part of the main flow chart or as a companion piece, be sure to include information on important program components such as financing and how those components relate to steps in the process.

Energy Smart Colorado Assessment Process Flow Chart for Contractor Participation

In Eagle County, Colorado, the **Energy Smart Colorado** program developed the **flow chart** below to illustrate the procedures that contractors follow when they participate in the program. It includes qualifications review and preparation, site work, and follow-up. A flow chart like this can be a good way to clarify and communicate your program's expectations for contractors.

*Source: **EnergySmart Colorado Assessment Process: Analyst Flowchart**, EnergySmart Colorado, 2011.*

Project Requirements Checklists and Forms

For major steps in the process, programs and contractors have found it useful to create detailed checklists that outline the necessary parts of each step. This helps ensure that the steps are completed correctly the first time, reducing misunderstanding and inefficient, costly back-and-forth between contractors and the program. For example, if contractors must submit a copy of the assessment report, an energy model, a signed work scope and contract, a project submission form, and any other materials when upgrade projects are completed, these requirements can be clearly spelled out in a checklist for both contractors and program staff.

Three examples of forms and checklists:

- **Initial project submission form(s)**. Programs involving more comprehensive improvements, affecting more of a home, often have pre-installation approval requirements. If yours has such requirements, you need to develop a submission process for contractors to follow. Historically this has been a paper-based process, but programs are moving toward online submissions and tracking—whether paper or online, though, the forms should contain all the information you will typically need to move the project to the next step.
- **Approval checklist**. Checklists are not just for contractors. To ensure consistency at the program staff level (and thus avoid confusing contractors), consider creating a step-by-step checklist that staff can use to make sure that program requirements are met and that any deficiencies can be fully and accurately communicated to contractors. You can make such a checklist part of a submission form—but make sure it guides your own staff in approving the project, rather than simply verifying that the contractor or homeowner has submitted the necessary information.
- **Project completion form(s)**. Especially when rebates or other incentives are involved, programs often require contractors or homeowners to submit post-completion or rebate eligibility forms. These can be paper-based or electronic—but, again, they must include all of the information needed to track projects and process payments or financing.

You can combine any of the forms described in this handbook into a single checklist for the entire process that a contractor and the program will follow. If you do combine forms, try to simplify the checklist as much as possible.

Create Checklists and Forms Easily with DOE's Standard Work Specifications Tool

DOE's **Standard Work Specifications** (SWS) in the **Guidelines for Home Energy Professionals** provides users with a quick and easy way to develop work orders, checklists, quality control inspection forms, and illustrated field guides. The tool defines minimum requirements for upgrade work and can be used to develop inspection checklists to verify that contractors are completing critical tasks. Using the SWS can help you ensure that work is completed and inspected to meet minimum specifications for quality.

Consider using the SWS tool to create field guides for contractors. Field guides can help ensure that contractors are aware of and can easily reference instructions on proper installation of common measures.

Quality Assurance/Quality Control Inspection Form(s) and Procedures

To encourage consistency in quality assurance inspections and to facilitate feedback, use forms or checklists to both conduct inspections and share results with contractors. You should consider a standard way of collecting the necessary data and communicating not just the overall results but also any expectations on correcting deficiencies. The NYSERDA contractor manual mentioned in a textbox earlier in this step includes quality assurance and inspection procedures and forms.

Your quality assurance efforts should support and be consistent with the **quality work standards** that you established for your program. You can also facilitate quality customer service through a code of conduct that your contractors agree to follow. For example, **Efficiency Maine's Contractor Code of Conduct** helps support professional contractor interactions with customers during the upgrade process.

When creating forms and procedures, pay particular attention to streamlining the data requirements and processes to minimize the burden on contractors and homeowners. This can also reduce the workload on the program. As well, keep an eye on your data needs, not just for the project process but also for **evaluation** and continuous improvement.

Create contractor recruitment and enrollment materials

Contractor enrollment information and applications are a subset of the overall program materials, but they typically involve different steps than projects. This means it is useful to call them out separately. As with the process for conducting upgrade projects, you will want to describe the enrollment and onboarding process for contractors. It will be helpful to have materials tailored for this:

- **Program overview materials**. You may be presenting this information in a contractor handbook, but it is also helpful to have an overview as a standalone document, which can be used to help engage new contractors in the program. First, it won't seem as daunting to a potential recruit, and you can help them focus on the key decision points without overwhelming them with details. Second, you can often distribute an overview when it would be too costly or impractical to distribute complete contractor participation materials. Think of overview materials as technical marketing pieces rather than as user manuals.
- **Enrollment application, agreement, and procedures**. The description of the procedures for enrollment and onboarding can take the form of a checklist or flow chart.
- **Orientation materials**. Typically, contractors are required to undergo some degree of program participation training—that is, orientation to help them understand how to participate in the program, distinct from any technical or business skills training. Depending on the level of detail in your contractor handbook, you may need more comprehensive instructions to address this requirement. Consider whether you need a "setup guide," independent of the handbook. (This may be influenced by whether onboarding is self-directed by the contractors or delivered in a formal setting by the program.) Orientation materials often include presentations to walk through the onboarding process and the project workflow.

To present this information in a clear and organized way, most programs use a combination of collateral material and a contractor-facing website.

Contractor Participation Agreements

After you've recruited contractors, ask them to complete and sign a participation agreement that clearly describes the requirements for their participation and the program's expectations for them. This agreement will help ensure that your contractors will satisfy customers through their interactions and that they will represent your program in the most positive light. Residential energy efficiency programs have approached these agreements in different ways, with some preferring simpler forms and others combining the form with other program background information.

- **Efficiency Maine's Registered Residential Vendor Agreement Form** is a short, checklist-style form that allows contractors to check whether they meet basic program requirements, identify their specialized service offerings and qualifications, and describe other information about their businesses. Other Efficiency Maine procedures and program background information are shared separately.

- The **Local Energy Alliance Program (LEAP) Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Contractor Participation Agreement** outlines expectations for contractors in the Charlottesville, Virginia, program. This detailed agreement includes information about the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR process, support services provided by LEAP, and requirements for participating contractors, such as business practices, energy assessment services, waste management plans, and payments.

Plan for regular contractor meetings

Starting before and continuing after program launch, plan for regular meetings with contractors. As part of your contractor engagement plan and your effort to continuously improve your program, you will likely conduct a variety of contractor meetings, possibly in different formats. In-person meetings often have a higher quality of interaction than phone or online meetings, and contractors are used to breakfast and brownbag meetings. If your contractors are spread out over a wide geographic area, though, online meetings may be more efficient than frequent in-person meetings.

You should create a meeting schedule and publish it at least two weeks in advance of any newly scheduled meeting, along with location information (or call-in information for online or phone meetings). Standing items to consider for these meetings include:

- Sharing program data and results
- Discussing any upcoming changes
- Announcing any opportunities for sales training and learning about new tools, methods, or materials
- Allowing plenty of time for discussion and feedback from contractors.

Develop training resources for participating contractors

At this point, you have **assessed the market** to determine skill gaps and training needs, **identified partners to help with training**, and made **design decisions** about training and workforce development. These efforts should have helped you to identify any gaps in training at the intersection of program requirements, contractor skills, and training providers. To fill these gaps, you will likely need to develop resources to support technical and business skills training, and to establish mentoring processes to help home performance professionals develop and retain their skills. In this step, you'll learn about developing training resources by working with your training partners and the types of training to provide.

Depending on local resources, and on whether you've aligned program requirements with industry standards and certifications, you may have fewer resource-development needs in this arena. To the extent that you've created unique standards or that local training partners cannot meet your technical needs, though, you need to be prepared to invest in developing training resources. In any event, you will want to work with your training partners, so that they understand program requirements and can best prepare contractors to meet them.

***Home Energy* Guide to Training Programs**

Home Energy magazine maintains a **database of national, regional, and local training organizations**. This can help you **find partners** to work with directly. Alternatively, some of your local partners may be available to team up with other training organizations to speed the development of technical training designed to meet the needs of contractors in your program.

Beyond basic familiarity with program requirements, including how to complete forms and how to use computer-based submission tools, contractors often need training on any modeling software you may choose to mandate. This is sometimes a component of technical training, but contractors often need additional training support, especially if you use unique modeling tools or have program-specific modeling requirements.

While a wide range of technical training resources are available, training on business, sales, and marketing skills for home performance contractors is less prevalent and often less available. These resources are very important because contractors need specific tools to market energy-efficiency improvements, such as improving home comfort and saving money on energy. For example, providing contractors with marketing guides, such as the **Building Science Translator**, promotes consistent and user-friendly messaging that homeowners will understand. As you've **identified partners**, including those who can provide basic business skills training, you will want to identify ways to tailor training for your targeted contractors and assign budget resources to support that customization.

California Uses Business Skills Boot Camps to Help Contractors Energize Their Business

In its implementation of the **Energy Upgrade California program** on behalf of PG&E, **Build It Green** hosted a series of in-person **business "boot camps"** to reinvigorate contractor participation and to help them learn how to market more effectively, increase sales, and operate efficiently. It has offered free two-day training for contractors and partners participating in the program.

An example of the two-day agenda is below. The boot camp covered a range of business topics and included a series of exercises designed to be revisited back in the office:

Day 1

- PG&E program updates
- Foundations of contracting success
- Marketing strategy, tactics, and management
- Effective messaging
- Missed marketing opportunities
- Social media basics

Day 2

- A consultative sales approach
- A framework for an in-house sales process
- Questioning to build understanding
- Sales exercises
- Objection handling
- Sales management basics

Following the boot camp, Build It Green offered an ongoing webinar series to both reinforce key topics and pursue some topics more deeply. Energy Upgrade California and Build It Green have also planned a follow-up in-person training series, designed to further reinforce and augment the principles and skills among participating contractors.

Beyond formal training, which is often conducted with groups of contractors, programs have been able to improve contractors' delivery with more informal mentoring using either internal or external resources. Examples include:

- **In-field technical mentoring**. It is unlikely that contractors adopting new practices or people who have begun to learn new skills will be able to use best practices in the field based on classroom or lab-based training alone. The process you develop to provide additional in-field technical mentoring will depend on factors including your quality assurance approach, the extent to which you've integrated training into your program, and the expertise of staff. Common approaches include sending trainers out in the field after formal group training, using site visits by account managers with technical proficiency, and combining a training and mentoring role with quality control inspections, especially for initial visits.
- **Business mentoring**. Programs are starting to expand the mentoring concept to support contractors' business skills development. Classroom training is an efficient way to deliver information and establish a foundation. However, contractors are often reluctant to ask critical questions or share sensitive concerns in a room with peers and competitors for fear that it will put them at a competitive disadvantage. When the conversation is one-on-one, they will point out specific areas where they need help, allowing you to provide more direct assistance. If you have this type of support in your implementation plan, you will likely have to develop some support resources, such as sales training presentations and exercises. While you may identify some business training resources, in many cases they will not be specific to the energy efficiency business.

Create other resources and processes to support contractors

Beyond training and mentoring programs, your **design decisions about contractor support** may include additional resources to help contractors adapt to program requirements and gain needed technical and business skills. This interaction can be extremely valuable; however, it can be resource-intensive. It might range from loans and/or loan forgiveness programs to helping contractors acquire diagnostic equipment to reimbursement for certain outside training to cooperative marketing programs. If you've included this type of support in your implementation plan, you need to develop a process that balances support with your budget and allows you to be efficient with staff time and abilities. Staff need to be prepared and trained to deliver the appropriate type and level of support as dictated by your program's design and plan.

For example, if your **program design** allows or encourages outside training, generally toward a program-required certification or similar credentials, you may offer some level of reimbursement of these costs for contractors. In the early days of its HPwES program, NYSERDA provided an incentive for each person who received BPI certification to cover the majority of the costs of certification. If your **market assessment** indicated that the certifications you've chosen to require are not widespread enough, this type of assistance may reduce a financial barrier and encourage early participation. Now you should consider the types of resources that you will need to develop to implement training cost reimbursement.

Resources you may consider developing include:

- Equipment loan brochures and application form
- Applications for tuition reimbursement
- Training resources brochure
- Rebate forms
- Invoice templates.

Develop contractor marketing support materials

You can support your contractors' efforts to reach new customers by providing them with marketing materials. Your program's marketing is covered extensively in **Marketing & Outreach**. To reduce your program's marketing production and distribution costs, increase brand recognition, and support your participating contractors, you may have already decided to provide marketing materials to contractors, either direct collateral (such as brochures or door hangers) or print templates that they can customize and print. For example:

- **Energy Works Philadelphia** allowed contractors to use the program brand in their own marketing material.
- Several programs, including **Michigan Saves**, created yard signs with the national Better Buildings logo that contractors can use in marketing.
- **Energy Upgrade California** in Los Angeles developed a series of templates for contractors to use in their marketing efforts. Contractors can log in to a Web portal to get the materials they need, when they need them. Products in the database include:
    - Consumer brochures
    - Lawn sign graphics
    - Web-ready banners and buttons about the program for the contractors' websites
    - Spot ads and short program movies that can be embedded in the contractors' websites
    - Market area maps
- **Illinois Home Performance with ENERGY STAR** provides contractors with an **upgrade completion certificate** that serves as a marketing tool for homeowners. Homeowners receive the certificate when their upgrades are complete, and can use the certificate as a feature when they sell their home.

You will want to work with contractors to gain their buy-in when **developing materials** to help ensure that they will use materials that both meet their needs and protect the program brand and message. This can deliver significant benefits to contractors that have limited experience designing marketing campaigns and could use more professionalism in their materials. The program's expertise and branding can be a valuable benefit to help increase legitimacy for home performance services offered.

To gain consistency in message and protect the program's brand, you should develop branding guidelines that explain how contractors can use program logos, talk about the program, and describe themselves in the context of the program. For example, at the national level, DOE has set **guidelines for how to use the HPwES graphic**.

Cooperative Marketing Assistance

You can work with participating contractors and other partners to co-market their home performance offerings. Beyond the materials described above, you may have decided on a cooperative advertising model, which shares the costs needed to create and place marketing materials. Typical cooperative marketing programs pay for a percentage of relevant marketing costs up to certain limits. You must develop the participation guidelines, such as use of logo and size and placement within an ad, the use of particular taglines, and which types of marketing efforts you will support.

Rather than merely granting a percentage of qualifying expenditures to a fixed ceiling, you can tie reimbursement to production thresholds. For example, you could provide a 25% co-marketing incentive, with an initial ceiling of $2,000. Then you could increase it to a $10,000 ceiling once they've completed 50 projects and a $25,000 ceiling once they've hit 100 projects, ensuring that your marketing dollars are going to contractors that have demonstrated an ability to deliver results for you.

With cooperative marketing, the program leverages contractor expenditures to increase the total market presence and to focus efforts where there are actively participating contractors to deliver energy-saving measures. This also extends the ability of contractors with limited resources to market themselves.

Develop process evaluation materials

Since you'll begin collecting data both for a **formal evaluation** and as part of your process of continual improvement, you need to develop tools to collect these data. Much of your data collection will be from the various forms and applications you've created for contractors and homeowners. Review those forms to ensure that you collect the right data at the right time.

Beyond these standard forms, you want to build tools to survey contractors and customers for qualitative feedback. This **example survey** might be sent to customers to gauge their satisfaction with their experience in the program, ascertain their satisfaction with contractors and the energy efficiency measures installed, and gather ideas for improvement. It's also important to find out why potential customers opted not to move forward; this **phone survey** shows how you might collect that information to find process or training issues that you could fix to improve conversion rates.

After developing these resources to recruit, train, and support contractors and home performance professionals in your community, you'll be well-positioned to deliver the contractor engagement and workforce development aspects of your program according to your implementation plan. The next handbook discusses **program delivery**.

Tips for Success

In recent years, hundreds of communities have been working to promote home energy upgrades through programs such as the Better Buildings Neighborhood Program, Home Performance with ENERGY STAR, utility-sponsored programs, and others. The following tips present the top lessons these programs want to share related to this handbook. This list is not exhaustive.

Help contractors enter the home performance market by lowering barriers to entry

Entering a new market adds risk to contractors' businesses. As several Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partners focused on their efforts to attract contractors, they realized that it would be valuable for them to help contractors enter the home performance market. Many programs took steps to lower or eliminate unnecessary hurdles or barriers to contractors' successful entry into the market. These barriers included long delays to receive payment for the program, paperwork burdens that were sometimes excessive enough to make contractors reluctant to participate, program expectations that were unclear to contractors, and upfront costs (e.g. for equipment purchases).

In Their Own Words: Mentoring Benefits Both Program and Contractor

Source: **In Their Own Words: Mentoring Benefits both Program and Contractor**, U.S. Department of Energy, 2012.

To help contractors overcome these barriers and enter the home performance market, many programs have provided program orientations covering expectations and procedures, offered mentoring and networking opportunities, and worked with contractors to improve work processes. Some programs have offered equipment loan programs, subsidized training, and other services to lower the upfront costs of entering the home performance market. Taking steps to help contractors enter the home performance market can help you establish a trained workforce of high-quality contractors to support home performance work.

- **Rutland County, Vermont** recruited and trained qualified technicians and "loaned" them to smaller contractors, to help them scale up to meet demand while mitigating business risk. The program set up a temporary labor pool that contractors could access when they needed greater capacity to meet demand. The labor pool helped new technicians enter the home performance industry, and helped smaller contractors weather seasonal fluctuation in market demand. Ten employees had worked in the labor pool as of 2012, with about three to five workers in the pool at any given time.
- **Fayette County, Pennsylvania** helped **contractors enter the market** by providing grants and financing to minimize startup costs, and by giving contractors the opportunity to provide Building Performance Institute (BPI) certification to their technicians. The program partnered with a local private industry council to train technicians to become BPI certified at no cost to students. The partnership program helped new home performance professionals start new businesses, for example, by providing grants and low-interest loans to purchase computer software and professional equipment. Ninety-four individuals completed the training through the partnership program. Training and certification in the home performance industry provided Fayette County residents with an opportunity for stable and well-paying careers. Ten employees had worked in the labor pool as of 2012, with about three to five workers in the pool at any given time.
- New Hampshire's **Beacon Communities Project** sought to reinvigorate the local economy of Berlin, New Hampshire, following the 2006 closure of a pulp mill. The program began working with local community colleges to provide BPI-certified training to develop more qualified home performance professionals. The program supplemented the training with mentoring opportunities for students who completed classroom trainings but needed more experience in the field before being hired by a contractor or starting their own company. In the nearly three years since the program's launch in September 2013, 42 students were trained through these classes and mentorships. These trained students helped the program offer quality home performance upgrades to homeowners, and the mentorship helped students become qualified home performance professionals.

- **Enhabit**, formerly known as Clean Energy Works Oregon, provided **networking and mentoring opportunities** to help contractors enter the home performance market. The program connected new contractors with peer mentoring services, allowing them to shadow an experienced professional in the field and office and get focused guidance from top-performing contractors. Mentors are compensated with additional project leads from the program. Enhabit also held morning meetings twice monthly for contractors to connect with each other. Contractors were able to use these meetings to organize and coordinate with the **Home Performance Guild of Oregon**, helping enable the Guild to expand significantly and to hire its first full-time executive director. As of December 2015, the Guild had over 50 home performance contractor members across Oregon, including more than two-thirds of the program's contractors.

Contractors are your sales team – educate and empower them with the skills to sell home energy upgrades

Many home performance programs have confronted the challenge of how to reach out to more customers and to improve conversion rates of customer interest into completed upgrades. Realizing that the contractor is a primary face-to-face link between customers and the program, some Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partners took steps to empower contractors to market program services through co-marketing and sales training. A comprehensive **evaluation** of over 140 programs across the United States found that successful programs have contractors who are skilled at helping customers understand the benefits of home energy improvements. Because contractors are often the main point of contact with participants, contractors must be trained to persuade homeowners to move forward with potentially costly projects.

Some programs were able to empower contractors by co-marketing and co-branding with them to reach new homeowners. Co-marketing can help both contractors and programs; a cooperative advertising model allows programs to share the costs to develop and distribute marketing materials. Co-marketing helps programs leverage contractor resources to increase their market presence, and extends contractors' ability to market themselves even if they have limited resources.

In Their Own Words: Empower Contractors by Building Sales and Business Skills

*Source: **In Their Own Words: Empower Contractors by Building Sales and Business Skills**, U.S. Department of Energy, 2012.*

Programs have found that offering sales training to home performance professionals can significantly boost sales and improve customer experience and conversion rates. During sales training, technicians can learn about the program's upgrade process, how to sell it using non-technical communications with customers, and other techniques for transforming assessments into upgrades. Programs saw benefits from offering free or reduced-cost sales training as a partnership benefit for contractors. Taking the resources to offer this training to contractor staff helped programs ensure that technicians understood and could promote program benefits, rebates, and other incentives available to customers. For many programs, contractor sales training resulted in more effective sales approaches, increased rates of conversion from assessment to upgrade, and increased revenues for contractor businesses.

- **Efficiency Maine** boosted conversion rates with **sales training**, which helped contractors communicate with customers more effectively. Through monthly webinars and professional development courses, the program has helped contractors improve their skills in targeted communication and selling program options, thereby increasing home energy upgrade conversions. After conducting a two-day sales training course for contractors, coinciding with additional homeowner incentives and a filing deadline, Efficiency Maine's average monthly rate of energy upgrade conversions increased from 10% before the training to 60% a few months afterward.

- **Energy Upgrade California in Los Angeles County** provided marketing materials and sales training to contractors. Having learned that contractors often do not have the time or experience to create marketing tools, the program developed an online resource center with customizable marketing kits for contractors. Frequent networking events for contractors also provided training on specific aspects of marketing. Because contractors had limited budgets, Energy Upgrade California established an online, on-demand print center that contractors can use to print and deliver program marketing materials. The marketing materials raised the visibility of home performance professionals, helped homeowners find qualified contractors, and ensured a consistent message about the program.
- Connecticut's **Neighbor to Neighbor Energy Challenge** found that contractors frequently have limited marketing capabilities to sell upgrades. The program hired energy advisers to help contractors move customers through the process from assessment to upgrade. Analysis showed that contractors valued the energy advisers and other program staff who provided small business support and development assistance. This support and assistance included sales training, sales process development, data management, and data analyses. These analyses included a scorecard and online dashboard showing how leads had progressed through the pipeline, contractors' rates for assessment completion and their upgrade rate, and contractors' marketing activity. Contractors benefited from the marketing tools to support home energy upgrades. The program also found value in requiring participating contractors to agree to a whole home performance orientation and well-defined sales process, as conditions to their participation in the program. The Neighbor to Neighbor Energy Challenge found that their upgrade rates improved after implementing these tools and tactics.

Connect home performance professionals to trainings focused on the skills that employers want and the community needs

Effective home performance contractors require many types of skills and expertise. To help individuals develop those skills, programs can target training on the specific topics and skills needed for successful home performance work. Many Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partners found that they could cost-effectively increase their contractors' access to training by engaging with expert partners to provide training, mentoring, and apprenticeship opportunities. A comprehensive **evaluation** of over 140 programs across the United States found that the more successful programs offered multiple training opportunities to contractors, either by delivering training or engaging partners to deliver training. By providing access to training, programs saw enhanced assessment quality, more effective sales approaches, increased rates of conversion from assessment to upgrade, more comprehensive upgrades, more effective and efficient installation processes, improved quality control, and increased revenues for contractors.

Training alone does not create jobs in the community, but you can increase the relevance of your training by using contractor input to select training topics. Several Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partners found that asking contractors what topics would be valuable also helped the program build an engaged and capable workforce. By providing access to the specific training that contractors want, programs can increase their chances of success by ensuring that they have a strong pool of contractors with a deep understanding of building sciences and the ability to install or subcontract a variety of energy-saving measures.

Some programs found success in working with education and training providers, such as community colleges, universities, and weatherization training centers, to offer valuable and appropriate training to their contractors. Apprenticeships, which can be a bridge between classroom training and being hired by contractors, helped some programs ensure that students acquired the skills that employers want. These programs also found that accredited, on-the-job training can be a relevant, less expensive, and more motivating supplement to classroom training.

- **Community Power Works** in Seattle piloted a new training approach to meet contractor needs and the requirements of the city's high-road workforce agreement. The program's original training programs relied on an outdated model of training, failed to prepare technicians properly to be hired, and lacked adequate mentorship and job-finding support for training graduates. The new approach included partnering with South Seattle Community College and the nonprofit Northwest EcoBuilding Guild, which offered classes and workshops, as well as participation by contractors to gather their feedback on training options. Training was available to both entry-level and experienced home performance professionals, and contractors were given the flexibility to hire first and train second (e.g., hire a technician who is not fully trained or certified but can begin or is in the process of completing certifications). In this way, the contractor could select from a wider pool of candidates and then provide supplemental training to those who need it. The training was fully subsidized by the program. By establishing these ongoing collaborative partnerships with contractors, Community Power Works helped to ensure that it has a robust workforce of trained professionals for the future. As a result of these partnerships, about 40 training graduates have worked around 23,000 hours on Community Power Works projects between April 2011 and December 2013.
- **Philadelphia's Energy Coordinating Agency** collaborated with the Community College of Philadelphia to design an apprenticeship program for energy efficiency and building science. Two one-year programs—"Building Energy Analyst" and "Weatherization Installer and Technician"—led to journeyman credentials and BPI certification. These programs trained home performance professionals with the technical building science skills they needed, while also providing hands-on experience with energy efficiency analysis and installation of energy efficiency measures. Program trainees helped residents save an average of 20% to 30% on utility bills through weatherization and energy conservation services.

- **Austin Energy** emphasized making its contractor training locally relevant. The program encouraged trainers to highlight issues that were particularly applicable to the local climate and housing stock, and to focus on regionally-appropriate amendments to energy code. For example, basements are uncommon in Austin houses, so training should avoid seeming out of touch and refrain from discussing basement upgrades. The program also learned that trainers should allow time for participating contractors to raise issues and questions that are specific to their geographic area and most pertinent to the local community in which they work.
- **EnergyWorks Kansas City's** program implementer, Metropolitan Energy Center (MEC), provided training and mentoring for home energy professionals, including training for BPI certification. Training courses included residential and commercial energy assessment, healthy homes, and deconstruction. One training session focused specifically on small and women-owned businesses. To follow up on the training, MEC instituted a mentored practicum experience in which each student was required to complete a full complement of diagnostic tests with the instructor in a dummy house. EnergyWorks Kansas City and MEC also worked with seasoned contractors to provide mentoring to newer contractors in the program. From 2011 to 2014, 90 individuals participated in MEC's introductory home performance training program. The training and mentoring program allowed new technicians to enter the home performance market: from 2009 to 2014, the number of certified residential auditors in Kansas City increased from six to over fifty, almost all of whom have received training from MEC.

Examples

The following resources are examples from individual residential energy efficiency programs, which include case studies, program presentations and reports, and program materials. The U.S. Department of Energy does not endorse these materials.

Case Studies

Spotlight on Fayette County, Pennsylvania: Developing the Skills and Tools for Workforce Success **(412 KB)**
Author: U.S. Department of Energy
Publication Date: 2012
This case study discusses strategies that Fayette County, Pennsylvania used to provide Building Performance Institute (BPI) certification and business skills training to aspiring energy efficiency contractors.

Program Presentations & Reports

Contractors as Clients: Data Collection Made "Easy"
Author: Cynthia Adams, Local Energy Alliance Program
Publication Date: 2011
This presentation provides an overview of the process and tools the Local Energy Alliance Program (LEAP) of Charlottesville, Virginia uses to collect and report customer and contractor data on projects.

Program Materials

Community High-Road Agreement for Seattle's Residential Retrofit Programs
Author: Community Power Works
Publication Date: 2010
This agreement outlines the goals, contractor standards, hiring standards, training program standards, and procedures for contractor participation in Seattle's Community Power Works program. As a "high-road" agreement, the employment and contracting standards are designed to ensure broad access to economic opportunities for all types of businesses and workers, support training on sustainable career paths, and ensure high-quality work.

Contractor Operations Guide for Boulder County's EnergySmart Service **(2 MB)**
Author: Populus Sustainable Design Consulting, LLC
Publication Date: 2011
This guide from Boulder County's EnergySmart service is an example of expectations and guidelines for contractor operations.

Efficiency Maine Contractor Code of Conduct **(55 KB)**
Author: Efficiency Maine
Publication Date: 2012
Efficiency Maine created a code of conduct for contractors to follow when working in homes. The code is available for download on the Efficiency Maine website, and dictates guidelines for respecting homeowners' property and communicating with the homeowner about appropriate information. Users on the Efficiency Maine website can search a list of vendors that have agreed to follow the code.

EnergySmart Colorado Assessment Process: Analyst Flowchart **(78 KB)**
Author: EnergySmart Colorado
This contractor process flowchart from EnergySmart Colorado includes the phases of contractor qualifications review and preparation, site work, and follow up.

Green Madison Contractor Questionnaire **(145 KB)**
Author: Green Madison
Publication Date: 2011
Questionnaire for contractors participating in the Green Madison program about their overall experience, level of participation, training, and available resources.

Green Madison and Me2 Consultant Survey **(103 KB)**
Author: Green Madison; Me2
Publication Date: 2011
Survey for consultants participating in Green Madison and Me2 programs about their experiences with the programs.

Local Energy Alliance Program Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Contractor Participation Agreement **(198 KB)**
Author: Local Energy Alliance Program
Publication Date: 2013
This is a contractor participation agreement used by the Local Energy Alliance Program in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Me2 Participant Survey **(554 KB)**
Author: Me2
Publication Date: 2011
Participant survey sent to Me2 customers that have completed at least the initial Energy Advocate visit.

Me2 Non-Participant/Drop Out Survey **(526 KB)**
Author: Me2
Publication Date: 2011
Survey for people who signed up to participate in the Me2 program for home performance assessments, but ultimately decided not to participate. The goal of the survey is to help improve services for future participants.

Community Workforce Agreement Between the City of Milwaukee and the Wisconsin Energy Conservation Corporation **(110 KB)**
Author: City of Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Wisconsin Energy Conservation Corporation
Publication Date: 2010
This is a community workforce agreement between the City of Milwaukee and the Wisconsin Energy Conservation Corporation.

NYSERDA's Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Process Flow Charts **(23 KB)**
Author: New York State Energy Research and Development Authority
Publication Date: 2010
Two visual flow charts, one that illustrates the process starting with customer interest to final incentive payment, and another that illustrates the program's quality assurance process.

NYSERDA Quality Assurance Procedures
Author: New York State Energy Research and Development Authority
Publication Date: 2012
This section of NYSERDA's Home Performance Contractor Resource Guide describes quality control procedures for initial review, field inspection, and administrative review of projects. Supporting worksheets are available to assist with compliance and verification.

RePower Problem Response Procedure **(441 KB)**
Author: RePower Program
Publication Date: 2013
This document details the procedures for identifying, documenting, and responding to performance problems associated with contractors in the RePower Program of Kitsap County, Washington. It includes example forms and a draft letter to contractors.

RePower Weatherization Specifications Manual
Author: RePower Kitsap
Publication Date: 2013
RePower in Bainbridge Island and Bremerton, Washington developed this manual as a set of rules and requirements for acceptable materials and installation procedures for energy efficiency measures installed in existing homes.

Request for Proposals for Phase V (Neighborhood Phase) of Clean Energy Works Portland (now Enhabit) **(226 KB)**
Author: Clean Energy Works Oregon (now Enhabit)
Publication Date: 2010
This is an example of an RFP for workforce development and other program elements. The RFP covers recruitment, outreach and marketing oriented to homeowners and workers, and service delivery of energy assessments and upgrades.

Vermont Community Energy Mobilization Project Home Visit Guide **(974 KB)**
Author: Efficiency Vermont
Instructional step-by-step guide for visiting a home to discuss and install energy efficiency measures.

EnergySmart Residential Survey **(81 KB)**
Author: EnergySmart
Publication Date: 2013
Example survey about a homeowner's experience with a visit from an energy advisor as part of EnergySmart in Boulder County, Colorado.

Toolbox

The following resources are available to help design, implement, and evaluate possible activities related to this handbook. These resources include templates and forms, as well as tools and calculators. The U.S. Department of Energy does not endorse these materials.

Templates & Forms

Clean Energy Works Oregon (now Enhabit) Contractor Upgrade Template **(145 KB)**
Author: Clean Energy Works Oregon (now Enhabit)
Publication Date: 2011
This template, used by Clean Energy Works Oregon (now Enhabit), standardizes a number of forms that contractors fill out for the program.

Efficiency Maine Residential Registered Vendor Agreement Form
Author: Efficiency Maine
Publication Date: 2014
A short, checklist-style form that contractors complete to participate in Efficiency Maine. The form allows contractors to verify whether they meet basic program requirements, identify their specialized service offerings and qualifications, and describe other information about their businesses.

Energy Impact Illinois Reporting Packet for Whole Home Projects
Author: Energy Impact Illinois
Publication Date: 2014
This packet contains all the contractor reporting and verification forms required by Energy Impact Illinois.

Los Angeles County Energy Issues Phone Survey **(194 KB)**
Author: Los Angeles County, California
Publication Date: 2010
Sample script Los Angeles County used to survey homeowners about energy issues.

Tools & Calculators

DOE Building America Solution Center
Author: U.S. Department of Energy
Publication Date: 2013
An interactive website that provides residential building professionals with access to expert information on hundreds of high-performance design and construction topics, including air sealing and insulation, HVAC components, windows, indoor air quality, and much more.

Green for All Energy Efficiency Toolkit
Author: Green For All
Publication Date: 2012
This practitioner-focused Toolkit for Residential Energy Efficiency Upgrade Programs was created by Green For All to assist new, established, and future energy efficiency programs launch and scale initiatives that can deliver the full promise of the green economy. It is intended as a practical resource that offers examples, tools, and templates that a program manager can deploy to implement a variety of aspects of their program including best practice briefs and summary documents, RFPs, contracts, and other program design and implementation templates that communities nationwide have used to create their own efficiency programs.

Home Energy Guide to Training Programs
Author: Home Energy Magazine
Publication Date: 2013
This web-based database, created by Home Energy home performance magazine, enables users to search for training programs nationwide. Users can filter training programs by weatherization training areas, BPI certifications, and more.

Topical Resources

The following resources provide additional topical information related to this handbook, which include presentations, publications, and webcasts. Visit **Examples** for materials from and about individual programs.

Topical Presentations

Residential Contracting Business Boot Camp
Author: Mike Rogers, OmStout Consulting, LLC
Publication Date: 2013
This presentation provides guidance to contractors on business fundamentals, marketing and lead generation, successful consultative selling and closing, and measuring and improving performance.

Publications

DOE Weatherization Assistance Program Technical Assistance Center Website
Author: U.S. Department of Energy
Publication Date: 2013
This website for DOE's Weatherization Assistance Program provides a virtual library of rules, regulations, policies, and procedures for helping low-income families reduce energy costs.

Energy Island: A Guide to Creating Your Island Energy Challenge (26 MB)
Author: RePower Bainbridge; Conservation Services Group; U.S. Department of Energy
Publication Date: 2014
This guide is designed to serve as a "how-to" reference for island communities (or small, similarly sized, more isolated communities) that want to develop and implement a residential energy-efficiency and conservation program. The purpose of this guide is to help communities chart a course for successful program development based on the lessons learned during implementation and operation of RePower Bainbridge, an energy-efficiency program on Bainbridge Island, Washington.

Green For All Minimum Standards for Residential Energy Efficiency Contractors (104 KB)
Author: Green For All
This checklist of minimum standards for residential energy efficiency contractors draws from several existing high-performing energy efficiency programs.

DOE Guidelines for Home Energy Professionals
Author: U.S. Department of Energy
Publication Date: 2012
Guidelines for home performance professionals for quality work, effective training, and professional accreditation.

Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Sponsor Guide and Reference Manual (v1.5)
Author: U.S. Department of Energy
Publication Date: 2014
The Sponsor Guide was designed to assist with developing an implementation plan for a Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program. It covers key elements of the plan, including the scope and objectives of the program and the policies and procedures that will ensure its success. The Sponsor Guide is divided into seven sections, each covering a specific requirement of the HPwES Program:Use and Management of the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR MarkProgram Design and DevelopmentWorkforce Development and SupportThe AssessmentProject InstallationQuality AssuranceTracking and Reporting.

Quality Assurance Best Practices: Home Energy Performance with ENERGY STAR Programs
Author: U.S. Department of Energy
Publication Date: 2011
This publication lists best practices for how to create a quality assurance plan and the components that these plans should include.

Residential Retrofit Program Design Guide
Author: Oak Ridge National Laboratory
Publication Date: 2011

The Residential Retrofit Program Design Guide focuses on the key elements and design characteristics of building and maintaining a successful residential energy upgrade program. The material is presented as a guide for program design and planning from start to finish, laid out in chronological order of program development.

Webcasts

Concierge Programs for Contractors - They're Not Just for Consumers Anymore
Presentation (1 MB)
Author: Jonathan Cohen, U.S. Department of Energy; Ryan Clemmer, Clean Energy Works Oregon (now Enhabit); Melanie Paskevich, NeighborWorks; Jay Karwoski, ICF International
Publication Date: 2012

This webcast includes slides and information on programs' use of concierge programs to support contractors. It highlights two program examples: Clean Energy Works Oregon (now Enhabit) and Vermont NeighborWorks.